



# Accreditation Progress Report

Brown County Schools

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# 1.0 About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

**Background.** Dedicated to advancing excellence in education worldwide, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 27,000 schools in 65 countries. AdvancED provides accreditation under the seals of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI).

## **The Accreditation Process.**

To earn and maintain accreditation, district/systems must:

### **1. Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems.**

District/Systems demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school systems to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

### **2. Engage in continuous improvement.**

District/Systems implement continuous improvement focused on improving student performance and school effectiveness.

### **3. Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.**

District/Systems engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, district/systems host an external Quality Assurance Review team once every five years. The team evaluates the district/system's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the district/system's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the district/system improve. The district/system acts on the team's required actions and submits an Accreditation Progress Report at prescribed intervals following the Quality Assurance Review.

The AdvancED accreditation process engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help district/systems be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.

## 2.0 Introduction to the Accreditation Progress Report

### **Purpose**

The Accreditation Progress Report (APR) is a critical component of the AdvancED accreditation process. It engages the district/system in a detailed review and analysis of the steps it has taken to address the required actions made by the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team. Completing the report helps the district/system focus and reflect on its continuous improvement efforts.

It is the responsibility of the district/system to address each of the QAR report's required actions within the 5-year term accreditation. Deadlines for completion of the report are based on the district/system's accreditation status and must be met to maintain accreditation. Some district/systems may complete multiple reports during the 5-year term to demonstrate that they have fully addressed the required actions.

### **Structure of the Report**

The APR is organized around the required actions in the district/system's QAR team report. The APR lists the required action from the report along with the rationale and evidence supporting the required action. The district/system then indicates the progress that it has made toward meeting the required action and provides a more detailed response describing the actions it has taken and the results obtained. The district/system provides a response for each of the QAR team required actions.

Following the district/system's response is the reviewer's response. Each APR is read by an AdvancED reader in the state or regional office who reviews the district/system's response to determine if the required action has been met. The reader provides his/her assessment of the progress the school has made and then offers comments to the district/system. If required actions remain in progress or not addressed, a new APR will be created with a new deadline for completion. As noted earlier, the district/system must address the required actions within the 5-year accreditation term.

### **Conclusion**

The Accreditation Progress Report is a useful report for members of the district/system and broader community. It helps community members see and monitor the ongoing improvement efforts of their district/system. It demonstrates how the district/system uses its accreditation for the ongoing benefit of the students it serves.

## 3.0. Summary

### **1.1. Based on the actions taken by your institution to address the required actions provided by the QAR team, what has been the impact on your institution's overall effectiveness?:**

The impact on the district's overall effectiveness has been pronounced. Required Action #1 alerted the district to the need for a more robust School Management System that would allow for the consolidation of oversight across key individuals designated to manage student and employee data. Required Action #2 has united the district in pursuit of its vision and meeting its mission through the development of a systemic set of priorities and initiatives for professional development. Required Action #3 has improved relationships with parents and the community by providing an avenue for communication that is essentially free from frustration. This has increased the effectiveness of our teachers and administrators at all levels in their ability to respond to the needs of parents and the school community overall.

### **1.2. What would you consider to be challenges that still lie ahead and how do you plan to address those challenges?:**

The greatest challenge that lies ahead are the unknown factors with the potential to impact sustainability of the actions taken and those yet to emerge as we plan additional improvement efforts.

### **1.3. How will you use the insights gained from your accreditation activities to inform and enhance your quality assurance and school improvement efforts?:**

Brown County Schools uses the insights gained from accreditation activities to assess the effectiveness of the district in its ability to meet its vision and mission. Providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all students so that they may benefit from the district's commitment to provide quality instruction, takes ongoing strategic planning in all areas of operation. Participation in accreditation activities assists us as a school system with choosing a direction, setting priorities, and naming specific actions that will lead to achievement of our goals. Data management, systemic professional development, and an improved email system have been our priorities. The next step is to measure the results of the efficiency and effectiveness measures taken.

Brown County Schools hosted a Quality Assurance Review team on 04/15/2012 - 04/18/2012. Through interviews with district/system stakeholders, classroom observations, and a review of district/system documents and student performance results, the team developed a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) report detailing its findings from the visit. The full report can be viewed at [www.advanc-ed.org](http://www.advanc-ed.org).

The QAR report contained commendations and required actions for the district/system. The district/system is responsible for addressing each of the required actions in the report. At prescribed intervals based on the district/system's accreditation status, the district/system must complete an Accreditation Progress Report. Below, please find the required actions from the QAR report and the district/system's response to each required action. Following the district/system's response is the reviewer's progress response and comments.

## 4.0. Required Action 1

**Source:** QAR

**Date:** 2012-05-03

### **Required Action:**

Assign primary responsibility for the collection, organization, maintenance and analysis of data to a single staff member and improve the focus on data analysis for systemic improvement.

### **Evidence:**

Information provided in the improvement plans for schools and the district demonstrates that a variety of data is collected and disaggregated for analysis. The analysis appears to be useful in making instructional decisions that improving student achievement. However, a well defined process of analysis and decision making for system improvement is absent from information provided by the district. Following interviews with central office staff and building principals, the QAR team notes the lack of a warehouse for all data and specific staff that is primarily responsible for managing that database. No link to Indiana Department of Education data for Brown County can be found on the district website.

### **Rationale:**

Organizations which base their decisions on appropriately analyzed data with the purpose of systemic improvement are more effective in meeting their intended purpose. A central responsibility for the security, distribution, and use of the data will help ensure tht process and its effectiveness.

## 4.1. District/System Response

**Progress Status:** Completed

**Response:** In October 2012, the Brown County Schools Board of School Trustees authorized the purchase of Skyward, an industry-leading student, finance, and human resources administrative software system exclusively for K-12 school districts. The core package for each suite was purchased along with several optional modules giving the district the ability to grow into the product. The transition to Skyward School Business Suite and Student Management Suite began in January 2013 at the district level with data conversion, role assignment, system set-up, and training. The process continued

throughout the summer of 2013 and has been an ongoing priority throughout 2013-2014 school year. Fully implemented components of the School Business Suite core package include Skyward Finance, Payroll, Employee Access, and State Reporting. The Employee Management component is not fully operational due to the diverse nature of human resource management in general within the Brown County Schools district office. Fully implemented components of the Student Management Suite include Skyward Student Management, Educator Gradebook, Graduation Requirements, Health Records, Family Access, Fee Tracking, State Reporting, with Textbook Tracking scheduled to go live summer 2014.

The Brown County Schools Treasurer has the primary responsibility for operations of the Skyward School Business Suite and the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent has primary responsibility for operations of the Student Management Suite. The Director of Technology installs system updates and facilitates the technical operation of Skyward in collaboration with the primary system managers. This arrangement accommodates the management hierarchy recommended by Skyward to implement each Skyward suite as well as the essence of Required Action 1. Additional staffing is currently under consideration so that full implementation of the Skyward Human Resource modules may be activated.

Organization and maintenance of the data housed in the Skyward Business and Student Management Suites has been assigned to two positions within the Brown County Schools Administrative Office. Analysis of the data in the system is achieved by the individuals in each of these positions running reports and sharing the information with Central Office administration.

## 4.2. Reviewer Response

**Progress Response:** Completed

**Comments for Institution:** AdvancED commends the institution for the steps it has taken to address the Required Action of the External Review team. As outlined in the institution's response, the institution has demonstrated its ability to effectively mobilize its efforts to respond to external direction for the benefit of the institution and its students. Based on this Required Action and the documented action taken by the institution the implementation of a systematic process will ensure data is handled effectively, efficiently and system-wide. AdvancED concurs that this Required Action has been implemented and encourages the institution to continue its work in this area.

## 5.0. Required Action 2

**Source:** QAR

**Date:** 2012-05-03

**Required Action:**

Provide systemically aligned professional development opportunities.

**Evidence:**

Research based professional development has historically been a strong focus of the district. Currently however, the professional development offerings have less of a systemic focus with limited common core literacy training and plans for high school literacy training. Interviews with staff indicate a strong value for professional development with consistent and regular opportunities for collaboration. The QAR team observed that the absence of long-range planning for professional development fosters a segmented implementation of initiatives in the schools.

**Rationale:**

In any highly effective organization the planned, intentional, and systemic training of its workforce is critical to achieving the desired results of significantly improving student performance and district and school effectiveness.

## 5.1. District/System Response

**Progress Status:** Completed

**Response:**

Professional development offerings are becoming increasingly systemic in their focus across the district. Grading practices that support student achievement, curricular unit planning, and the integration of new software applications resulted in districtwide professional development expenditures of approximately \$95,000 dollars in 2012-2013. Administrators, teachers, and support staff have, and continue to, participate in both onsite and remote learning sessions as new modules of the Skyward suite are implemented. Integration of this new software has assisted with targeting variables in the assessment of student learning within courses at all levels noted in the results of a grading practices survey conducted K-12 in the winter of 2012. Further assessment of the extent to which grading supports student achievement has been intentionally configured into the Skyward gradebook set-up for 2013-2014. All teachers have been required to organize their course level assessment of student learning into categories developed by district administrators after a review of those most commonly reported by teachers as used in the previous gradebook system. Principals have been asked to review teacher gradebooks throughout the year and hold conversations about their contents. This intentional year-long assessment of grading practices will be used to provide the foundation for determining next steps in professional learning around topics such as daily formative assessment and common summative assessment within subjects and courses across grade spans.

Research-based professional development in literacy was noted by the Quality Assurance Review team to be systemic through grade 6. To connect to this work, Brown County High School has participated in the Reading Apprenticeship Improving Secondary Education (RAISE) grant. This summer, the school's fourth cohort of teachers will participate in RAISE professional development focused on increasing reading comprehension of high school students through use of metacognitive disciplinary literacy strategies. In addition, the gap between grade 6 and grade 9 will be addressed through Brown County Junior High's participation the middle school extension of RAISE referred to as Reading Apprenticeship Writing Connections (RAWC). With this opportunity in place, the district will have support a K-12 research-based approach to



instruction that builds content literacy skills within the disciplines of English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies.

## 5.2. Reviewer Response

**Progress Response:** Completed

**Comments for Institution:** The institution has sufficiently addressed the Required Action of the External Review team. As detailed in the institution's response, the institution has implemented a range of strategies that attend to the areas noted in the External Review team's Required Action. The institution is encouraged to embed and sustain these strategies to ensure continued results. A rigorous professional development plan based on the needs of the institution builds capacity among staff and ensures effective instruction to meet student learning.

## 6.0. Required Action 3

**Source:** QAR

**Date:** 2012-05-03

### **Required Action:**

Resolve email issues that limit parent/community communication.

### **Evidence:**

The administration's open-door policy fosters an atmosphere of communication. Regular newspaper columns by the superintendent are a valuable tool in disseminating information to stakeholders. School and teacher newsletters impart school level information to parents. The district is piloting an online parent information system. However, through numerous stakeholder interviews, the QAR team learned that the district email system is currently a frustration to parents and school staff who find that filters block delivery of many legitimate emails to staff inboxes.

### **Rationale:**

Effective two-way communication requires consistently dependable avenues. Email has evolved to be an excellent means of communication in today's world. To be open and responsive to its stakeholders, the school district must improve its email delivery system.

## 6.1. District/System Response

**Progress Status:** Completed

**Response:** All email issues have been resolved with transition to Microsoft Outlook. Other modes of communication between school and home have been implemented to include Skyward Family Access and School Messenger. Concerns regarding direct access to teachers and administrators via email is have been resolved 100%.

## 6.2. Reviewer Response

**Progress Response:** Completed

**Comments for Institution:** After reviewing the institution's response, AdvancED concurs with the institution's assessment that this Required Action has been implemented. Increased communication will provide more positive engagement in the institution and will build a stronger sense of community and ownership. The institution has taken the necessary steps to address the Required Action made by the External Review team. The institution is encouraged to monitor its ongoing activities to ensure that the actions taken to address this Required Action are sustained over time.